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ABSTRACT

One strategy available to beginning learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) is the use of memorized phrases or routines that they hear frequently in the out-of-class environment. These routines allow them to participate in basic sorts of interaction while they are waiting for their analytic linguistic ability to catch up with their communicative needs and desires. This study defines and distinguishes between affective and cognitive based classroom activities, and between acquisition and the learning process. It then argues for an eclectic language teaching methodology. A brief survey of the current research is presented relating to the use of memorized speech segments by beginning language learners, and an attempt is made to present a rationale for actively teaching prefabricated or routine formulas to beginning students as a viable strategy for early communication. Empirical evidence is given on the effect of this strategy on the classroom atmosphere, and the practical application and psycho-social effects by and on the students. Criteria are given for selection, as well as examples of interactions, and ideas to help the teacher implement this strategy. (Author/AMH)

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INSTANT INTERACTION FOR ENTRY-LEVEL ESL STUDENTS

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One strategy available to beginning learners of ESL with immediate needs to communicate is the use of memorized phrases or routines. During the long, slow process of learning to construct their second language word by word, rule by rule, students are often able to tune-in to expressions or phrases that they hear frequently in the out-of-class environment. Recent studies are showing that second language students have a great capacity to "pick-up"--to memorize and repeat in generally appropriate situations--a great deal of language with very little awareness of the actual grammatical structure of what they are saying. These routines allow beginning students to participate in basic sorts of social interaction while they are waiting for their analytic linguistic ability to catch up with their communicative needs and desires (Krashen/Scarcella 1979).

This paper will, first of all, define and distinguish between affective and cognitive based classroom activities and between acquisition and the learning process. It will then argue for the importance of eclecticism in language teaching methodology. Third, a brief survey of current research will be offered related to the use of memorized speech segments by beginning language learners, and an attempt will be made to present a rationale for actively teaching prefabricated or routine formulas to these students as a viable strategy for early communication.

Empirical evidence will be shared regarding the effect this strategy may have on the classroom atmosphere, and regarding the practical application and psycho-social effects by and on the students. Several criteria will be given to facilitate selection of actual content of these routines, and three pages of actual sample instant interactions will be shared. Finally, ideas will be suggested to help the teacher implement this strategy in the classroom.

This paper was presented at the CATESOL Conference in San Diego, April 18, 1980.

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Introduction

Traditional approaches to the teaching of ESL have emphasized the cognitive aspect of the learning process, presenting English as a specific set of rules for generating sentences. They have focused primarily on the grammatical and structural properties of the language. In the past few years, however, teachers are becoming more and more aware of the influence of affective factors in language learning. Lesson presentations are evolving into new combinations of activities which appeal both to the mind and the heart, if you will, in order to best achieve the optimum learning environment.

Studies done by such linguist-educators as Schumann (1978), Galyean (1980), Curran (1972), and Stevik (1976) have shown us the high importance of psycho-social and cultural phenomena in second language learning and have encouraged classroom teachers to seriously consider these phenomena when selecting their methods and materials.

Additionally, recent work has shown the important distinction between the learning process and acquisition (Krashen 1978). Learning, briefly, has been defined as the conscious result of actual formal language instruction, and acquisition has been defined as the natural or unconscious "picking-up" of a language which transpires when one is placed intensively within the social and linguistic environment of the target language. Krashen and his colleagues, Tracy Terrell and Jeanne Egasse (1979), among many others, feel that though language learning is a result of a combination of both these processes, the primary source for attaining real communicative competence is acquisition.

Teachers and materials developers have come to realize that in order for classroom efforts to yield significant results and produce successful communicators, language instruction must provide both learning and acquisition activities and must appeal to both cognition and affect. Course outlines have begun to shift from a clear focus on the linguistic elements to a heightened attention to actual language use. Greater consideration is being given to the feelings and real needs of the students and to their specific reasons for learning the language, hoping in this way to assist their self-expression in a variety of social and linguistic situations.

In a contemporary ESL classroom, then, students are offered a wide variety of activities to assist them in the language learning process. No longer is language instruction merely a case of text, workbook, substitution drills, grammar structural analyses, and translation. To be sure, these traditional practices are still a viable part of a teacher's repertoire, but today's approach is multi-modal. The language student receives a virtual "31 Flavors" of pedagogy. All the senses are activated and stimulated in today's classroom, which makes use of multi-modal teaching strategies: posters, pictures, cards, films, tapes, video, records, musical instruments, chants, live action, physical response, cuisenaires, and drama. All of these strategies provide the student with high interest, low stress, super motivation, and, as a result, students seem to learn faster, retain better, return to class more often, and have more fun! (Bassano, 1979).

Language Acquisition Through Memorized Routines

If a being came to the United States from another planet and wanted to attend a formal dinner, it would find it necessary to observe the behavior of

the others in attendance in order to fit in and not make any wild errors in social conformity. This being would watch table behavior and use a fork to eat the salad--it may not use the right fork but it certainly wouldn't use the big spoon! The more this creature attended banquets, the closer and closer its behavior would resemble the exact social requirement for that particular social setting, through the process of imitation. One natural strategy available to beginning ESL students with immediate needs to communicate is the use of imitation: memorized phrases or routines. During the long, slow process of learning to construct their second language word by word, rule by rule, students are often able to tune in naturally to expressions and phrases that they hear outside of class and imitate them in generally appropriate moments. Current studies done by Hatch (1972), Clark (1974), Peters (1977), Fillmore (1976), Hakuta (1974) and Krashen and Scarcella (1979) show that second language students have a great capacity to "pick-up" pieces of language--to memorize, imitate and employ a great deal of language with very little awareness of the actual internal grammatical structure of what they are saying. These routines allow beginning students to participate in a basic, rudimentary sort of social interaction while they are studying and waiting for their analytic linguistic ability to catch-up with their communicative needs and desires.

Thus far, there has been very little research on the use of routines and patterns in second language acquisition, and these few studies that are available deal primarily with the use of this strategy by children. Many questions remain unanswered regarding the nature, the source and the usefulness of memorized speech segments. It is generally believed that the use of prefabricated routines is a result of a cognitive process that is separate and different from the process of analytic or creative language. But do memorized speech segments ever become incorporated into structure? Do they ever evolve into creative language? Are they forgotten or discarded when creative language prevails? Does the learning and use of a certain pattern motivate a search for its internal structure? Or, does it, in fact, hinder the search because it is easier to use the memorized utterance? These are questions that have been generating a great deal of interest and which have been answered tentatively and with variation.

Clark, in her observation of children, finds that some routines do, indeed, seem to develop into patterns which in turn become a part of creative language. She has found that during acquisition, a child becomes increasingly more capable of organizing linguistic structures at a number of different levels concurrently. She suggests the possibility that the speech of a learner of a second language becomes "creative through the gradual analysis of the internal structure of sequences which began as prepackaged routines" (Clark 1974).

Peters makes a distinction between what she terms analytic and Gestalt styles of speech--a sort of one-word-at-a-time process concurrent with attempts to employ whole utterances in socially appropriate situations. She suggests that those learners who attempt a Gestalt approach to speech in their early stages of acquisition, may have to convert slowly and painfully to a more analytic approach. She feels that the Gestalt method may be only a temporary strategy used by the performer in order to out-perform his/her analytic competence when it is necessary to solve certain communication problems. According to Peters, though all performers must eventually come to generate creative utterances at some point in their language development, the Gestalt strategy is real and deserves further investigation right along with the analytic process. She states that theories need to be developed that

include and account for all existing strategies used by language learners, and that the literature must be searched for other evidence, however implicit, of use of the Gestalt mode of speech development (Peters 1977).

Kenji Hakuta, in his analysis of three types of prefabricated routines used by a five-year-old over a period of fifteen months, came to the conclusion that memorized phrases are used as props only to give temporary support until a "firmer foundation is built."

Fillmore set out to discover what sorts of social processes were involved when children who needed to learn a new language came into contact with those from whom they were to learn it--but with whom they could not communicate easily. She observed that these children, in order to make social contact and to put themselves in a position of being in an environment where they could receive more input, had to first give the appearance that they knew enough of the language to be included in activities and conversations. By memorizing a few well chosen words and using them at the right time, they were allowed to join the circle, their new acquaintances adjusted their language for the beginner, and the beginner had the opportunity to observe and acquire the exact language he or she needed. Thus, using memorized segments or phrases was an active way of seeking out further input rather than waiting for it to arrive; it served as a key, so to speak, to open the door to interaction and further exposure to and immersion in the new language.

Krashen and Scarcella, in their survey of the literature related to the use of memorized routines and patterns in second language acquisition and performance concluded that though these routines may be helpful when "conversational demands are present and the acquirer is not yet competent in the second language" and, though they are "useful in establishing and maintaining relations," they do not serve a primary role in language acquisition and performance" (1979, p. 283). They have decided that "successful teaching systems expose second language learners to input in which routines and patterns play a minor but significant role," adding that such exercises "may provide a domain for conscious rule learning, either as an environment for working out rules (inductively) or as a place to practice rule application (deductively) and to receive feedback" (p. 297).

Because so many questions remain unanswered regarding this topic, and because the strategy of using memorized speech segments is a "natural"--employed by virtually all students of a second language at some time in their acquisition process--I have attempted to discover some of the most basic and important routines "picked up" by students and then to expand on them in the classroom. What resulted was a series of short, emotive, encounters which focus on the affective aspects of language learning, aid language acquisition, and introduce certain essential common social interactions through brief memorized routines.

Practially speaking, I have observed that practice with these short transactions assists the student in his or her out-of-class environment in several ways. It provides an instant means to expression of certain personal needs or feelings even in the initial stages. It offers awarenesses of culturally appropriate responses for many ordinary day-to-day transactions and provides a sort of "reconditioning" or "desensitizing" to cultural differences that subtly cause problems (such as the use of a very high register of tone by Americans which is often interpreted as anger). These activities expand on the use of body language and tonality as auxiliaries in communication, when lexical items are not yet available. Perhaps most important, and

in keeping with the observations made by Fillmore in her dissertation (1976), these memorized phrases seem to allow students more access to small talk or the words necessary to enter into the conversation circle. They help them to capture someone's attention and exercise the cognitive strategies they have learned in the classroom. It allows them a turn to speak and develop further verbal and non-verbal skills by giving the impression that they can speak and understand the new language somewhat and are available for conversation if one will just simplify or adjust the level of difficulty a little. In short, these routines can be used for communication long before anything is known about structure.

Pedagogically, the practice of these "instant interactions" enhances the classroom setting by providing variety and by allowing the students to get up and move about the room. These interactions are "energizers." Instead of focusing upon the learning process, they distract the student from the dry nature of a "task" and enter him or her into an exciting participation in a "game." An atmosphere of playfulness and lightheartedness is established, encouraging experimentation with the new language. This allows the expression of emotions--emotions never even touched in texts and workbooks--providing an environment where students may discharge the bound feelings and inhibited emotions so common to the reacculturation process. Anger, frustration, confusion, impatience, as well as gratitude, affection, and interest can be released in an effective and harmless manner by acting out various social transactions in the classroom. It gives the students the feeling of real and meaningful communication during their early stages as they see others react and respond to their utterances and noises and body signals.

Carlos Yorio, of the University of Toronto, presented a paper at TESOL '80 which offered a very complete analysis of the types of routines and formulas that students of a second language acquire in developing communicative competence. He divided them into the following categories:

1. Situation Formulas--which are very culture bound and used only in specific situations. Because of their complex conditions of use, they are very difficult to teach for production, but still may be taught for recognition and comprehension. Ex. "This hurts me more than it does you." "I thought you'd never ask." "You had to be there."

2. Ceremonial Formulas--which may be of a religious nature; e.g. "Amen." "Dearly beloved.," or which may be forms of address indicating deference in hierarchical relationships; e.g. Ms., Sir, Professor, Madam, etc.

3. Stylistic Formulas--which reflect certain registers, such as those of the business world, academia, or formal; e.g. "Ladies and Gentlemen..." "To whom it may concern..." "Please be so kind as to..."

4. Euphemistic Phrases--which are used to avoid taboo subjects; e.g. "I have to go wash my hands." "He is no longer with this company." "I think I am going to be sick." "She passed away."

In an entry-level class, we are not too concerned with these four types of social formulas or routines, as they are often very complex or specialized and not particularly relevant to our students' needs. The fifth category outlined by Professor Yorio is labeled Gambits. These seem to correspond to the types of routines best learned and employed by beginning students. Some types of gambits delineated by Yorio are the following:

A. Conversational--Guess what....! Speaking of....., That reminds me....., Not to change the subject, but....., What do you think?

B. Organizational--I pass. It's your turn. And then..... Come on.... Ready?

C. Insults--What's it to you? It's none of your business.

D. Sympathy Forms--That's too bad. I'm sorry to hear that.

E. Hesitation Phenomena--Well..... Uh..... And so..... You know..... Wait a minute...

To Yorio's list, I would add these, based on my own classroom experiences:

F. Compliments--You look really nice today! What great shoes!

G. Agreement/Disagreement--On the contrary. I don't think so. It sure is! They certainly are! I'll say!

H. Avoidance/Hedging--Thanks anyway, but.... Well, I don't know.... Never mind.....

I. Capturing Attention--Hey! Listen! Look out! Help! Excuse me, but...

J. Asking/Giving Help--I lost my.... I need..... I don't understand, show.. May I help?

K. Apologies--I'm sorry.... Oops. Excuse me. Pardon me. That's okay, don't worry about it.

L. Leavetaking--See you later. So long, nice to see you.

M. Asking for Repetition--What did you say? Please?

N. Greetings/Openers--What's new? What's happening? Where are you going? Hello there!!

The four criteria Yorio would use in selecting which particular routines to teach are as follows:

1. the needs and objectives of the students,
2. the usefulness or urgency of application of the routine at the beginning level,
3. the productivity or possible use of the routine frequently and in a variety of situations, and
4. the currency of the routine--is it modern usage and found in the major dialect?

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[1]For further information on the nature, extent and variety of gambits used in everyday conversation, I refer the reader to a book entitled simply Gambits by Keller and Taba.

To these four criteria, I would add one more essential--according to my personal preference:

5. That the interaction produced by a combination of related routines be typified by emotional expression or by a sense of humor (through either the specific content or through exaggerated tonality).

Instant Interactions

In the following pages of this article are samples of highly popular and easily learned instant interactions for beginning level students. These interactions have been proven to fit the above-mentioned practical application, classroom response, and criteria for selection.[2]

1. Hi!	Good morning!
Hello!	How are ya!
What's new?	Same old thing.
What's happening?	Nothing much.
2. Excuse me!	That's Okay.
Pardon me!	That's all right.
Oops! I'm sorry!	No problem.
Uh oh....!	Don't worry about it.
3. Give it to me!	No, it's mine.
May I have it?	Huh uh....
I want it!	You can't have it.
Please!	No, I'm sorry.
4. Come on!	Wait a minute!
Let's go!	Just a minute!
Hurry up!	Take it easy!
I'm waiting!	don't rush me!
5. What's the matter?	Nothing.
What's wrong?	Nothing. I'm fine.
Are you okay?	Yes, I'm all right.
What happened?	Nothing. I'm okay.
6. Ah....come on!	No, it's true!
Oh...You're just joking!	No, really!
I don't believe it!	I'm serious!
You're kidding!	I'm not kidding!
7. Can you help me?	Sure! Be glad to!
I need help, please	Sure! What can I do?
Will you help me for a minute?	Be happy to!
Help!!	What's the matter? Can I help you?

[2] For further ideas for a more advanced level class, I refer the reader to a book entitled Developing Communicative Competence: Interaction Activities in ESL by Judy Kettering (1975).

8.	Cigarette? Beer? Chocolates? Hamburger?	No, thanks. I don't smoke. No, thanks. I don't drink much. No, thanks. Sugar isn't good for me. Thank you, but I don't eat meat.
9.	You look really nice today! I like your hair! What great shoes! You look terrific!	Oh, thanks. Thank you! I'm glad you like them. Thanks a lot!
10.	What a beautiful day! Isn't the weather nice? What great weather!	It sure is! It certainly is! I'll say it is!
11.	I have to go. It's getting late. Well, it's time to leave. I really should go now.	So soon? You just got here! It's early. Please don't go!
12.	Would you like to sit down? Would you like a sandwich? Would you like to come in? Would you like some tea?	Yes, thank you. No, thank you. Well, okay, for a few minutes. Ummmm....yes, please.
13.	Do you want to take a walk? How about a movie? Would you like to go dancing? Join me for dinner?	No, thank you. I'm too busy now. I'm sorry. I have other plans. Maybe some other time. Thank you, but I can't tonight.
14.	I feel awful. I feel terrible. Ohhh, my head. Ohhh, my stomach.	You should go to bed. You should see a doctor. You should take an aspirin. You should stay home and rest.
15.	Hi ya cutie! Hey sweetie! What's doing, baby? Come here a minute!	Get lost. Beat it. Don't bother me. Go away.

How to Use Instant Interactions in the Classroom

The easiest way to introduce an instant interaction to a class is by way of an emotive role-play by the teacher and his or her aide, using props, appropriate (perhaps exaggerated) tonality, and body language. After the students are allowed to observe the interaction three or four times, the content is written on the blackboard and one or two words are taken in isolation for pronunciation practice if necessary. (Particularly difficult utterances for a beginner are "MAY I..," "JUST A MINUTE," "WOULD YOU LIKE..," "CERTAINLY," "YOU SHOULD..," "FEW MINUTES...") The class is then divided into two groups --one group speaking along with the teacher, the other with the aide. The tonality and emotional quality of the interaction are stressed. Little attention is paid to the pronunciation or grammatical correctness of the utterances at first--these can be fine-tuned after the students have reached a stage of abandon and distraction from the task. It is most important that they feel

the communication, they they allow the emotional aspect to come out, and that the tonality and body language are accurate. After this initial practice in unison and after roles have been switched, there are two ways in which to practice for personal proficiency in these interactions. The students may each choose a partner to work with (or play with!) and all partners may practice at the same time until each pair can complete the interaction without assistance. During this time, the teacher can travel about the room listening to each pair and offering them assistance in making their communication more "believeable." The second way in which to practice is a little more dynamic in that it allows interaction with more than one partner. Half of the class forms a line, and is assigned the "left half" of the interaction. They may want to rehearse it a few times in unison. The rest of the class forms a line facing the first line, and they are assigned the "right half" of the interaction. At a signal from the teacher, each student will carry out his or her half of the interaction with the person facing him or her only one time. When all have completed the communication, the students on the right will move down one place in order to face a different partner. (The one on the end moves to the front of the line to find a partner.) In a sort of "musical chairs" pattern, the students go through the same interaction with different partners three or four times. Then roles are switched; the lines change places physically and are reassigned the other half of the interaction to practice with three or four partners.

The first time this is attempted, the students will be a little confused trying to understand what is going on and what exactly is expected of them. However, they will pick it up quickly and from that point onward, it is only necessary to say, "Let's make a line and try it!" and they will understand and direct themselves. The teacher is allowed to just sit back and watch it happen!

Obviously, the main advantage to this "line practice" is that all students may speak at the same time and experience different accents and levels of proficiency in their partners. Additionally, there is the "anonymous" aspect of only being heard by one person at a time. This allows the student to experiment and practice without worrying about making a mistake, thus gaining confidence in his or her ability. After this type of practice, some students may want to perform "solo" and that's okay. Naturally, it is not a good idea to require this! One way to reinforce the learnings on the days immediately following the initial presentation, is to wait at the door when the students are dismissed and approach them with the interaction as they leave.

Second language learners have everything to learn about their new language, and they have little to work with except their general awareness of how languages work based upon their experience learning their first languages. Every now and again, we teachers run into an old student--one we haven't seen for a couple of years. And we remember that it was Carlos who needed a full week to learn the colors and said things like, "I no hab de chews," and "Abra la window, plis," and "Si, you like I take you coffee?" And after two years a miracle has transpired. Carlos is the head chef at the Holiday Inn (worked his way up from dishwasner), and has just come by to tell us about it, saying "Well, how have you been, anyway? I've been trying to find the time to drop by and see you but I am so busy!" All this with only a slight trace of accent! And we wonder just what it was that finally reached Carlos. Was it the daily hum-drum phonics practice? The substitution drills? The dialogues? The music? Or was it, perhaps, a combination of every little thing we presented in the classroom plus every little bit of "outer world" input that

brought his success?

Fortunately, ESL is a field that has few voices crying out for the one answer--the one right way to teach language. For it is obvious that there is no such thing--no one methodology or approach that works for all teachers at all times with all class populations. Effective teachers gather as many strategies as possible into their class presentations. They provide lessons that appeal to both the acquisition and the learning modes and to both the affective and cognitive realms. If you will permit me to return to the banquet metaphor, Instant Interaction exercises are merely another side dish in the ESL teacher's pantry; they are there to try whenever the moment seems right. I hope ESL teachers will find them a lively, enjoyable, and effective technique for making their students feel successful and communicative early on in their learning process.

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